

Monadnock Profile

Doing wonders with troubled boy led Pateys to establish a school

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RINDGE — Adelaide Walker Patey is a pioneer in special education.

In 1948, with her late husband, Henry Curtis Patey, she founded Hampshire Country School, a boarding school in Rindge for children of high ability, but with emotional problems.

It was, and is, a very unusual school and its success sprang from the Pateys' genius for helping troubled children.

It was a talent they discovered in the early '40s, when they were living in Wellesley, Mass. Henry Patey was working as a psychologist and Adelaide was teaching foreign languages at Dana Hall in Wellesley.

It all began one night when a psychiatrist who knew Henry Patey dropped in. "He said the son of a friend of his was in a very severe condition," Mrs. Patey recalled.

"The boy was only 14 years old and the psychiatrist said, 'He will be in a mental institution for the rest of his life if somebody won't help him. His parents have searched everywhere and can find no help. Will you take him?'"

"This boy was an only child from a



Adelaide W. Patey

wonderful family and the psychiatrist said, 'There is nothing really wrong with him, but the boy thinks there is ... so, it's all the same.'"

Henry turned to Mrs. Patey and said, "Do you think we could take him?"

"What else can we do? There's no other way," she replied.

The boy had been expelled from

private school. His parents had been trying for a long time to find a private school or treatment center for him. His mother could do nothing with him.

"And so we took him into our home and Henry gave up practically everything else," said Mrs. Patey. The boy was never left alone. Henry Patey worked almost 24 hours a day with him.

"The first week he was with us, we couldn't get him to eat. It took us all day just to get him up out of bed and to the table," she said.

"When he finally was at the table, he'd start to pick up his food like this," Mrs. Patey said, demonstrating a slow, stiff, full arm movement with her hand stopping in mid-air about 18 inches from her mouth. "He just couldn't get it any closer. It was the most pitiful thing you ever saw."

They tried all kinds of things to get the boy moving. One thing that worked happened after a cyclone hit Wellesley, when Henry Patey had started guying up trees and saving what he could. Broken limbs had to be removed and the trees sawn. Patey had a two-handed saw and he and the boy cleaned up the cyclone's mess.

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